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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Steve Berger, pastor of Grace Chapel in Leiper's Fork, TN.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray together.

Almighty God, King of Creation and Ruler of the Universe, we thank You for Your undeniably sovereign, merciful, and benevolent hand in the forming, leading, and blessing of these United States.

Father, thank You for revealing Your will and Your ways to this Nation and its leaders through Your sacred, Holy Word.

We pray, therefore, that we would be united in doing what is good in Your sight, and what You require of us, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

Father, may our leaders and our Nation also walk in the faith of Abraham, the integrity of Moses, the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of the Prophets, and the self-sacrificing love and compassion of Jesus.

O God, when we fail to walk in Your ways, and sin against You and one another, may we be quick to humble ourselves and pray, to seek Your face, to turn from our wicked ways, that You might hear from Heaven, forgive our sin, and heal our land.

Remember mercy, O God, and revive us in Your ways, that this Nation might be blessed for generations to come.

We ask all these things through the Name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The Senator from Tennessee.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise to speak of Pastor Steve Berger. It moves me to hear his voice echoing throughout this Chamber. He is one of the pre-eminent spiritual leaders in our Nation. He prays daily with his wife Sarah, who happens to be in the Chamber.

He prays daily for our Nation. There is a purity of his mission in leading a church that is making a difference in our State, and I think making a difference in our country, leading efforts not only here but around the world to bring people together, and I am so thrilled this Chamber and the people of our country are able to witness someone who I believe to be one of the greatest spiritual leaders in our Nation.

I only hope more people would be able to hear from him. Truly, it is a very moving moment for me to have a friend like Steve Berger, who means so much to our State and country, before us. I thank him for his willingness to do this.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I welcome Steve Berger and thank Senator CORKER for arranging for him to be here today. Steve is, indeed, one of our most distinguished Tennesseans. We welcome his family and some of his friends who are with us in the Gallery.

Chaplain Barry Black has reminded us that this tradition of opening the Senate with a prayer has been with us since the Senate began, and the Senate has had a Chaplain before the First Amendment to our Constitution was

adopted. This tradition is an essential part of the American character, and having Steve Berger here to help us celebrate that essential part of the American character is a very special moment for me as well as for Senator CORKER.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, President Obama's approach to national security policy began with unworkable ideas on the campaign trail, and it has been marked by some consistent themes, like inflexible commitments to drawing down our conventional military posture from across the globe, like an excessive reliance on international organizations, like a tendency toward the use of Special Operations forces to train and equip units in other countries.

What do we see as we look back now at the twilight of his Presidency? We have seen increased instability in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen. We have seen the evolution of Al Qaeda in Iraq into ISIL and its expansion into Libya, Syria, and the Sinai.

In just a few short months, the next Commander in Chief, regardless of party, will be faced with the consequences of the President's failed foreign policy and will need to adapt an insufficient defense modernization program to tackle both the challenges posed by terrorism and by adversaries like China, Russia, and Iran.

This is why we need to use the remaining months of this administration to help prepare the next administration, regardless of party, to deal with the news it is about to inherit. That is

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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